Movements Reported in Wallace Legs

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By Stuart Auerbach
Washington Post Staff Writer

Alabama Gov. George C. Wallace has shown the first signs of movement in his paralyzed legs in a week—an involuntary twitching of his toes that his own neurosurgeon said yesterday does not mean that he will ever walk again.

Nevertheless, the twitching of the toes—first spotted by a nurse at Holy Cross Hospial Sunday afternoon and induced at least twice since then by tickling the toes—encouraged both his family and his campaign aides.

"It's the beginning of a process we had hoped to see and were praying for," said Billy Joe Camp, Wallace's press secretary. The governor's wife Cornelia said, "I'm not surprised. I was most optimistic all along and I thank the people of this country for their prayers and I hope they will continue to pray for my husband."

Doctors, though, were less optimistic about the involuntary movements—reflex actions that Wallace could not control himself.

"It is nothing to get excited about but it is encouraging," said Dr. Joseph Schanno, the head of the Holy Cross team that operated on Wallace for five hours last Monday night after he was shot in a rally in the Laurel Shopping Center.

Dr. James Garber Galbraith, Wallace's own neurosurgeon from the University of Alabama Medical School in Birmingham, said through his

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secretary "he does not think that this means anything."

Earlier in the day, Galbraith told The Associated Press, "Any change at all is of some guarded significance. That is, anything is better than nothing. But . . . it . . . should not be cause for great optimism . . .

"It might signify that, if there are increasing changes, they would be increasingly hopeful . . ."

A neurologist here, who asked that his name not be used, said, "This indicates a return of reflex activity in the portion of the spinal cord below where it is injured.

"This is a normal sequence of events in a cord that is still irreversibly damaged, and does not mean a return of voluntary activity. I don't think this changes anything."

Doctors will operate on Wallace, 52, later this week or early next week to remove the bullet. This will give the surgeons a chance to see with their own eyes exactly how badly the cord is damaged.

The time and place of the operation still has not been set, although Camp said Wallace and his staff would like to have Galbraith perform the surgery in Alabama.

A nurse first discovered the twitching toes when she checked the Democratic presidential candidate Sunday afternoon. Later, George C. Wallace Jr., the governor's 20-year-old son, tickled his father's feet and got the toes moving again. Doctors repeated the tickling yesterday morning and found the twitching "more pronounced" in the left foot than the right.

They also noted "encouraging evidence of increasing sensation" down to Wallace's mid-thighs—not surprising considering how far down in the spinal cord the bullet is lodged.

Physiotherapy has progressed from massages to exercises on a tilt-table, the hospital announced.

Wallace drank cold milk every two hours, made his first two telephone calls (to his mother and the Rev. Billy Graham), watched television (the Hee Haw program and a news show) and conducted the first state business since he was shot, (appointing a legal adviser in his office and approving a $12-a-month increase in old age pensions).

He was visited yesterday by Vice President Spiro T. Agnew, who said Wallace looked "extremely well. The governor is very alert and talking a lot about politics."

Wallace's Manager Is Pleased at News

By a Washington Post Staff Writer

PORTLAND, Ore., May 22 —Alabama Gov. George C. Wallace's national campaign director called the news of involuntary movements in the governor's feet "the greatest information we've had since the shooting took place."

Charles Snider added, "If I know Gov. Wallace like I think I do, he'll walk out of that hospital and he'll be on his feet and he'll be fighting there with the best of them in Miami Beach" at the Democratic National Convention.

Snider also said Wallace had asked him to reiterate his opposition to gun control legislation in the wake of his own shooting.

"He said he doesn't feel laws would have helped in any way in this situation," Snider said. "Laws would take guns away from the law-abiding. but anybody who wants to violate the law and obtain this type of handgun could do so."

Snider further said the governor felt his police and Secret Service protection "could not possibly have been better."